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ABSTRACT

This fastback examines the instructional and administrative benefits of year-round education and describes schools currently operating on a year-round schedule. Instructional benefits of year-round education for gifted, average, and remedial students are cited in a brief introductory article. Other benefits, discussed in more detail, include relief from overcrowded facilities, additional compensation for teachers, enhancement of the teaching profession, reduction of teacher burnout, cost savings, improved teacher and student attendance, reduced vandalism, and improved opportunities for student employment. A series of possible year-round plans are next described: 45-15 single-track; 45-15 multi-track; 60-20 plan; 60-15 plan; 90-30 plan; trimester plan; quarter plan; quinmester plan; concept 6 plan; five-track, five-term plan; and a flexible all-year plan. Remaining sections discuss teachers' and parents' reactions to the year-round concept and considerations for bringing about change. The final section presents profiles of year-round education in action at selected elementary, middle, and high schools. A 15-item bibliography is included. (TE)

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The Year-Round School: Where Learning Never Stops

Charles E. Ballinger,
Norman Kirschenbaum,
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The Year-Round School: Where Learning Never Stops

by
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Norman Kirschenbaum,
and
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The chapter sponsors this fastback to honor Joseph M. Nygaard for his long and distinguished career in education as teacher, principal, superintendent, and professor. He was dean of the College of Education at Butler University where he developed the Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals.

In 1984 Dr. Nygaard received the Butler University Alumni Association's highest honor, the Butler Medal. He has served as faculty advisor and secretary/treasurer of the Butler University Chapter for many years.

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Introduction

Thoughtful observers both in and outside of the education community are challenging the traditional school-year calendar in the United States. They raise such questions as: Why do America's schools continue a school calendar that interrupts formal instruction for up to three months at a time? Are there ways to reorganize the school year so that summer learning loss is reduced? Can remediation of learning problems occur at periodic intervals other than during traditional summer school classes?

The September-June calendar followed in most of the nation's schools is outmoded instructionally and difficult to defend academically. A fact often overlooked is that this calendar was never designed for instructional reasons in the first place. Rather, it was created to support the agricultural economy of the early 1800s. What is the justification for continuing a nineteenth-century, agricultural-based school calendar in an urban-suburban nation only a few years away from the 21st century? How many students were required to bring in the harvest last summer? Shouldn't we instead be asking questions about students who have too little to do during the long summer vacation – those who youth workers, recreation leaders, and police officers tell us are unsupervised, unoccupied, and unemployed for much of the summer?

Furthermore, the U.S. labor force is less influenced by the growing seasons than ever before. As a result, lifestyle changes make it

possible to take vacations throughout the year. To the consternation of many educators, families with children in school increasingly withdraw their children at various times throughout the year in order to take advantage of seasonal vacation opportunities.

There are other issues that should cause us to question the continuing use of the September-June calendar. These include: 1) limited financial resources to fund all the education projects deemed good and worthy by educators and the need to distribute those resources in efficient and creative ways; 2) competition for the same tax dollars by various government agencies, each of which asserts that it is doing good things for people; and 3) a growing student enrollment in many parts of the country, which must be housed in existing facilities. In all of these instances, pressure is growing to maximize the use of available tax dollars. In short, there is a growing demand by the U.S. taxpayer for government, including the public schools, to do a better job of providing services to people with existing resources.

One solution to the problems listed above is the year-round school providing year-round education. Year-round education is an inclusive term that may include 1) a reorganization of the standard 180-day instructional year so that learning is continuous throughout the year; 2) an administrative arrangement known as multi-tracking, which allows an over-enrollment of students in limited space by dividing the student population into equal groups, with some students in attendance while others are on vacation; and 3) an extension of the school year, providing up to 240 days of instruction annually.

This fastback will examine the instructional and administrative benefits of year-round education and will describe schools currently operating on a year-round schedule. As we shall see, year-round education has many kinds of calendars. It is contemporary and it is flexible. It is instructionally sound and it has shown its worth fiscally. Year-round education is currently operating in more than 400 schools in some form and is here to stay. The authors believe that its implementation on a broad scale is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

Instructional Benefits of Year-Round Education

Many educators have long questioned a system that permits a three-month disruption of the formal learning process. Because learning is sequential and continuous, educators over the years have developed curricula that assume sequence and continuity. Yet the September-June calendar interrupts continuity in the summer months, thus the subsequent need for extensive review in September and October. Such review wastes time that could more profitably be used by students, whether at the top of the achievement scale or the bottom.

A school's most able students learn continuously in school and out of school; they learn because of us and in spite of us. Nevertheless, a more continuous flow of instruction throughout the year would enhance their learning. The same situation holds true for the least able students. These students learn best by a continuous pattern of teaching, practice, reteaching, and more practice, until they finally grasp the concepts being taught. The long summer vacation disrupts the continuous learning pattern needed by the slower student. Average students are likewise ill-served by the September-June calendar. The four to six weeks of review that teachers commonly offer in September and October for the benefit of slower students is largely wasted time for the average student. In this era of the effective schools movement, it is difficult to justify two or three weeks of time wasted on review not needed by average and above-average students in the heterogeneous class.

In many states an increasing number of students come from homes where English is not the primary language. We know that proficiency in language requires formal instruction on a continuous basis. A long summer vacation disrupts this formal training. For most students, the language of summer is the language of the family and community, whether it be English or another language. Three months away from formal instruction curtails students learning a new language, whether they be English-speaking students learning Spanish, Spanish-speaking students learning English, or any student learning any new language.

School districts with more than a decade of experience with year-round education report that their students do as well as or better than their September-June cohorts, regardless of the type of year-round calendar used. Moreover, not a single school that has implemented year-round education has experienced a drop in achievement because of its implementation. For example, student achievement scores in the large Los Angeles Unified School District's year-round schools show a higher rate of gain than comparable September-June schools in the district. Houston's year-round schools have similarly shown improved achievement scores. The Oxnard (California) School District, a middle-sized district, likewise has shown achievement gains for its year-round students compared to its September-June students. In each of these districts a majority of students in the year-round schools are from minority groups; yet they have realized achievement gains that are clear and unmistakable. Also, significant achievement gains have been realized in year-round schools where white students are in the majority. Provo (Utah) City Schools report achievement gains in their year-round students, as have schools in middle-class communities in other states.

By effective use of students' vacation periods, called *intersessions* in the year-round education lexicon, it is possible to provide immediate remediation as well as enrichment for students. Intersessions can be used for students needing remedial help in reading, math, spelling,

study skills, and writing without waiting for the traditional make-up courses typically offered in summer school. Several year-round districts have developed interesting enrichment intersessions, including specialized and concentrated programs in the arts, sciences, and local government. The potential that intersession time offers for improving student achievement and for enriching the curriculum is a major instructional benefit of year-round education.

Based on several years of experience, year-round education proponents are convinced that the concept is good for all students, whether gifted or remedial, whether middle class or lower class, whether white or any other ethnic group. Proponents would argue further that every school in this nation – elementary, middle, or secondary – ought to move away from a September-June calendar and toward a year-round, continuous mode of instruction. Vacations are important, but they do not have to be three months long. They can come in shorter, less disruptive blocks of time. Education is also important; therefore, the potential instructional benefits of a restructured school year should cause educators to give serious consideration to the year-round concept.

Other Benefits of Year-Round Education

In addition to the instructional benefits described in the previous chapter, there are several other benefits of the year-round concept. This chapter will discuss some of the more important ones.

Relief from Overcrowded Facilities

A multi-track, year-round schedule is one way of handling the problem of over-enrollment in limited facilities. With this form of scheduling, students are divided into equal groups, with most students attending school while others are on vacation. When vacationing students return, another group takes its vacation. The following example shows how such scheduling would work.

Suppose 1,000 students are enrolled in a school with a rated capacity for only 750 in attendance at one time. The administrator organizes the total number of students into four groups of 250 each for a total of 1,000. Three of the groups, or 750 students, are in school at one time and the fourth group is on vacation. When the vacationing group returns, another group of 250 goes on vacation. Thus, there are never more than 750 students in the school at one time. The stated capacity limits are observed, but a greater number of students can be served in a given school. Year-round scheduling plans are described in greater detail in the next chapter.

Additional Compensation of Teachers

Teachers who work in year-round schools have opportunities to earn additional compensation. For example, teachers who are on their scheduled vacations of three or four weeks can serve as substitutes, if they so choose, for other teachers who are on another schedule in their same school or for teachers on a September-June calendar school in the same district or in a nearby district. Continuing the example, year-round teachers on their scheduled vacation of three weeks can play for a week, be a substitute teacher for a week, and then play for another week before returning to their regular assignment. Substituting in this pattern, teachers can easily work four to nine extra weeks each year, thus supplementing their basic contractual income.

In addition to serving as substitutes, year-round teachers may also request an extended contract year. Teachers desiring longer contracts can request to teach intersessions (the equivalent of teaching summer school); to take on special assignments other than classroom teaching, such as developing new curricula or instructional materials; or to continue teaching on other year-round tracks. The flexible options provided by the year-round schedule could solve two common problems of the profession: having a cadre of qualified substitutes available when they are needed and providing professional work for teachers who would otherwise seek summer employment out of their fields and often at much lower pay.

Enhancing the Teaching Profession

Because salaries in the teaching profession have traditionally been low compared to other professions, many bright college students have been discouraged from entering it. Higher salaries resulting from extended year contracts or more teaching days enhances the profession and could attract high caliber college graduates to consider teaching as a career. Also, with better salaries, more persons will enter the profession, thus alleviating the predicted shortage of teachers in the near future.

Reducing Teacher Burnout

Year-round education calendars allow for breaks in different parts of the school year. The long summer vacation of the September-June calendar is broken up into smaller but equal parts. This gives teachers time off in each season of the year, rather than only during the hectic summer months when most people vacation. With more frequent breaks, teachers can relax, travel, study, and pursue a variety of other recreational activities, which may reduce the stress factors that lead to eventual burnout.

Cost Savings

There have been several studies on the potential cost savings of year-round education. Conclusions indicate that multi-track calendar programs have the potential for saving a school district money in both operating and capital outlay costs. Oxnard, California, a middle-sized district, reports that its multi-track, year-round programs save the district approximately $1,000,000 annually in operating costs and has already saved the district $5,000,000 in unneeded capital outlay costs, a figure that will increase to $10,000,000 over a four-year period.

Improved Teacher and Student Attendance

Most year-round education districts report that both teacher and student attendance has improved in those schools where the year-round schedule has been implemented. San Diego, Houston, Oakland, and Oxnard all report higher attendance figures in their year-round schools than in their September-June schools. The reason for the improved attendance seems to be associated with the more frequent vacation periods. With more frequent vacations, teachers seem to have less need to use sick-leave days for rest and recuperation. Also, students seem more eager to return to school to see friends after a short vacation period.

Reduced Vandalism

Several districts, including San Diego, Houston, Los Angeles, and Chula Vista, California, have reported reduced vandalism costs after implementation of year-round education. Two factors seem to contribute to this reduction in vandalism. First, because the building is in almost continuous use, there are fewer days when it is unattended by school personnel. Most vandalism occurs when school buildings are unoccupied. Second, because of the more frequent vacation periods, there seems to be less tension between students and the school, thereby lessening provocation for vandalism.

Improved Opportunities for Student Employment

Opportunies for student employment can be enhanced in communities using the year-round concept, because students are available for jobs throughout the year, not just in the summer months when there are too many students competing for too few part-time jobs. Community leaders may wish to rethink whether it is wise public policy to graduate several million students each June, forcing them to compete for limited jobs at the same time. Year-round education has enough flexibility so that students could be graduated throughout the year, thus reducing the intense competition for the same jobs that occurs each June.

The Various Year-Round Plans

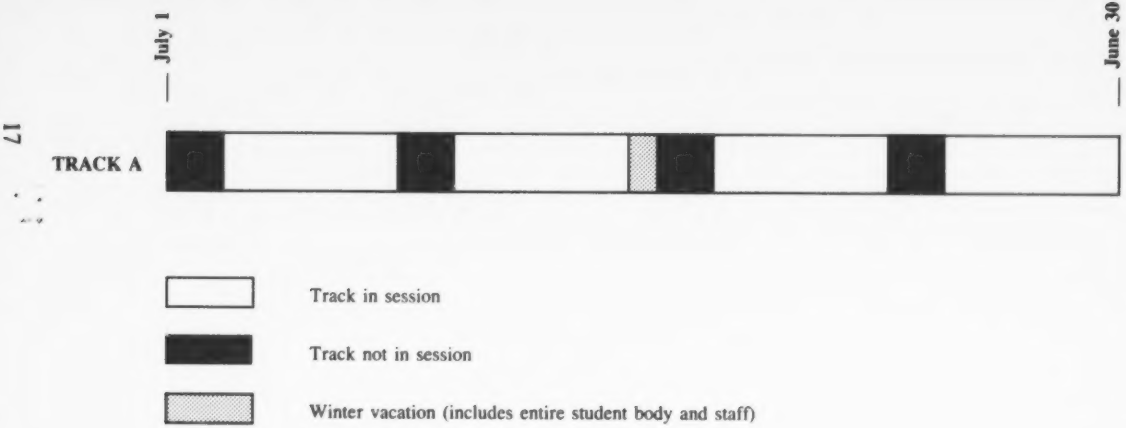
The year-round education concept provides several options for restructuring the school year to provide better education for students. This chapter includes descriptions and examples of year-round calendars that have been designed by school districts across the nation. Many of the existing year-round calendars realign the school year into periods of instruction followed by vacation (called intersession). Other calendars extend the school year to provide more days or to provide greater availability of instruction. Space permits describing only a few of the most commonly used calendars. Other kinds of calendars are possible; educators should be encouraged to design their own schedules to meet local conditions.

45-15 Single-Track Plan

One of the easiest plans to implement at either the elementary or secondary level is the 45-15 single-track calendar. This plan divides the year into four nine-week terms, separated by four three-week vacations or intersessions. Students and teachers attend school for nine weeks (45 days), then they take a three-week vacation (15 days). This sequence of sessions and vacations repeats four times each year, thus providing the usual 36 weeks or 180 days of school. Figure 1 on page 17 shows how the calendar year is divided. Note that four additional weeks each year are allocated to winter holidays, spring vacation, and national, state, or local holidays.

Figure 1

45-15 SINGLE TRACK PLAN
(or 45-15 Block Plan)



In implementing the 45-15 Single-Track Plan, it is not always possible to be consistent because of the way legal and local holidays fall. Most terms will follow the 45-15 day sequence, but other terms might have a 47-13 day arrangement or a ten-week/four-week sequence around the Thanksgiving and winter holiday (Christmas) periods.

The clear advantages of a 45-15 calendar over the September-June calendar are:

1. Provides consistent pacing of instruction.
2. Breaks up long three-month summer vacation, thus reducing learning loss.
3. Costs approximately the same as the September-June calendar.
4. Provides vacation in each season of the year.
5. Allows flexible time for substituting if a teacher wants to work a longer contract year.

The disadvantages of this calendar are:

1. Does not coincide with the September-June calendar schools in the district.
2. Requires more beginnings and endings of instructional periods than do some other year-round calendars.

In planning instructional time allotments in the 45-15 calendar, educators must recognize that each semester has two nine-week segments, or quarters, for instruction. Each instructional block will have its own grading period, with a total of four grading periods each year. The 45-day instructional period could be one unit of nine weeks, or it could be broken up into three 3-week units.

The 15-day period in which students do not attend school is called intersession. This period may be used for vacation, or teachers and students may choose to spend the intersession for special one-, two-, or three-week programs. Intersessions may be used for traditional curricular offerings, either remedial or enrichment, or for elective on-campus or off-campus learning opportunities. The programming potential of intersessions is one the instructional advantages of the 45-15 Plan.

45-15 Multi-Track Plan

Some school districts have used the year-round concept in situations where there is an over-enrollment of students for the available space. Using the same model as the 45-15 single-track concept presented above, administrators can modify it to combine several groups (tracks) of students in such a way that available space increases by 20% to 50% without building new facilities.

In the 45-15 Multiple-Track Plan, students are normally divided into two to four groups, depending on enrollment. For example, in a four-track version of the plan, while groups A, B, and C, are in school, group D is on vacation. When D returns, A goes on vacation. The rotation continues every three weeks, thus providing for 25% additional space in the school. Each track has its own 45-15 schedule of nine weeks in school and three weeks on vacation. Teachers usually follow the track schedule of their students; however, they can be reassigned to another track, thereby lengthening their contract year and earning a larger salary. Figure 2 on page 20 shows how this plan works.

In addition to the advantages of the 45-15 Single-Track Plan mentioned earlier, three additional advantages can be cited for the multi-track version:

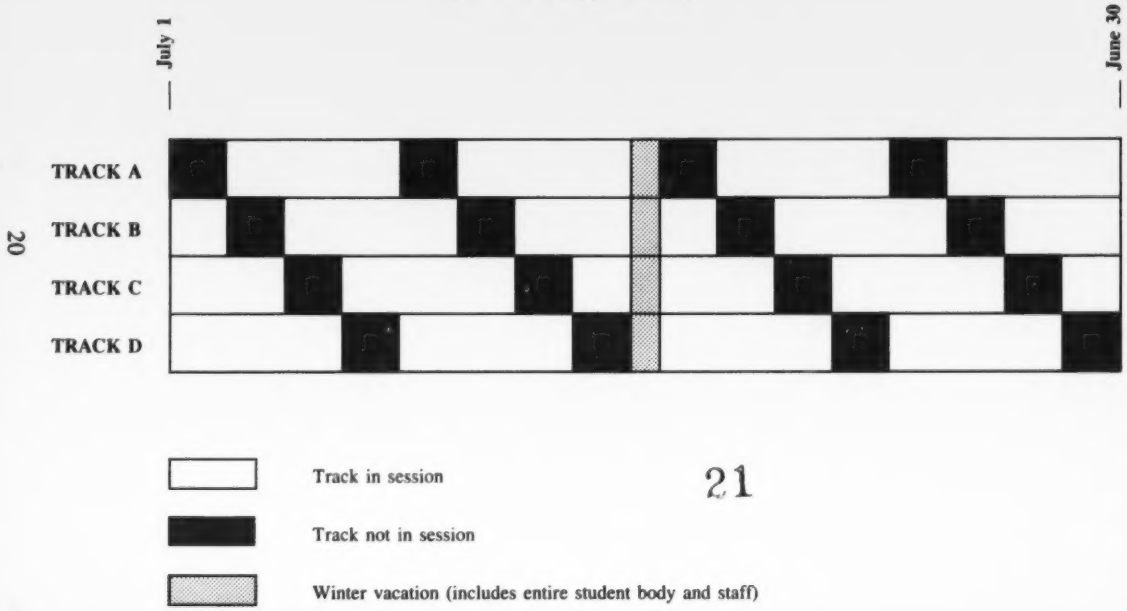
1. Allows a minimum of 180 days of instruction.
2. Can increase a school's capacity by up to 50%, depending on the number of tracks used.
3. Contributes to substantial savings in both operational and capital outlay costs.

Additional disadvantages beyond those mentioned for the single-track plan are:

1. Requires a greater amount of moving from room to room if a teacher is assigned to "rove" between tracks.
2. Requires a greater amount of shared space for storage of teacher and pupil materials.

Figure 2

45-15 MULTIPLE TRACK PLAN
(or 45-15 Staggered Plan)



3. Requires additional planning of schedules and more communication between those on-track (in school) and those off-track (out of school).

Instructional considerations for this plan are similar to the single-track plan. Instruction will consist of four quarters, each nine weeks long, with four grading periods. Instructional units may be for the entire quarter or may be broken into shorter units within each quarter. In either plan, intersession remains a significant program option for either remediation or enrichment.

60-20 Plan

This plan is a variation of the 45-15 schedule, with students attending school for 60 days and then vacationing for 20 days. Students rotate through the year until they have had three 60-day terms and three 20-day vacations. The 60-20 Plan can be varied to take account of holidays and state attendance regulations. It can be conducted in either a single-track or a multiple-track format. This plan has become a good compromise for those who want longer teaching and vacation periods and are not wedded to the traditional semester or quarter calendars.

60-15 Plan

This plan borrows from both the 45-15 and 60-20 plans in that the instructional period is 60 days and the vacation period is 15 days. By rearranging the instructional days, a common summer vacation of three to four weeks can be given to all students and faculty. It is usually implemented with five tracks available to students.

90-30 Plan

This schedule includes two 90-day semesters separated by a 30-day vacation period. Schools are closed during the traditional winter holiday

period and spring vacation. As in the 45-15 and 60-20 plans, this calendar can be conducted as either a single-track plan or a multi-track plan.

Trimester Plan

The Trimester Plan uses three instructional periods of 60 days each rather than two semesters of 90 days each. This plan is similar to the 60-20 Plan, but the vacation (intersession) periods are more flexible and may vary from two to six weeks, depending on the calendar adopted by the community.

Quarter Plan

One of the best known plans, and perhaps the easiest to understand, is the quarter system. It was the first year-round calendar implemented in the early 1900s after the nationwide adoption of the common nine-month school year. Some colleges use this plan. The Quarter Plan divides the calendar into four 12-week periods in fall, winter, spring, and summer. Students may select, or be assigned to, any combination of three of the four quarters. They may attend the fourth quarter on a voluntary basis, either on or off campus. The curriculum is organized so that each quarter is a separate entity. A course begins and ends with each 12-week period. For example, social studies and English programs may offer a series of separate but related courses. Subject areas requiring sequential treatment such as mathematics will be offered in each of the four quarters to complete a year of work.

Quinmester Plan

The Quinmester Plan divides the school year into five parts, with students required to attend four of the five parts. This calendar is most often used at the secondary level for grades nine through 12. The school year may range up to 220 days, with vacation periods averag-

ing about seven weeks. The quinmester plan often operates on a single-track pattern.

Concept 6 Plan

Concept 6 has been used successfully at both the elementary and secondary levels. It is particularly useful when there is lack of space. It requires that students be divided into three groups, with one group always on vacation, thus releasing a considerable amount of space for instructional use. A high school built for 1,600 students can house 2,400 under a Concept 6 three-track plan. It also can be administered in a single-track pattern. The Concept 6 Plan calls for six terms of approximately 43 days each. Students attend four of the six terms but must attend two of their four terms consecutively. For example, Group A begins in July for its first 43-day term; it is then joined by Group B for another 43 days. Group C enters, but Group A, having completed its 86 days, goes on vacation for 43 days.

The plan provides for 160 or more days each year. In states where 175 or more days of attendance are required, additional days can be completed by over-lapping the groups on half-day sessions the first and last day of each term, by independent study and intersession programs, or by creative off-campus group activities. In states that mandate the number of minutes per year in various subjects as a substitute for the number of days, Concept 6 can operate effectively by extending the minutes of instruction each day so that the total accumulation of minutes equals the minimum number of days required by the state.

Five-Track, Five-Term Plan

The Five-Track, Five-Term Plan divides the school year into five terms of 45 days each. There are five terms in each track. Students attend four of the five for a total of 180 days of instruction annually. This plan is used only on a multi-track basis. It provides for a common summer break of approximately three weeks for all students.

Flexible All-Year Plan

The Flexible All-Year Plan is gaining in popularity with various kinds of alternative schools. Basically, this plan calls for school to be open for instruction approximately 240 days per year, although, theoretically, a school year could be longer in states where Saturday and Sunday are now legal school days. Students are required to attend the minimum number of days designated by each state.

To operate this plan, teachers must be willing to individualize learning. Students have three choices: 1) they may attend all days the school is open for additional learning opportunities, even though only 180 may be required; 2) they may attend only the required 175-180 days and spread these days over the 240 that instruction is available; or 3) if a family needs or insists on the traditional nine-month calendar, the student can start by a set date in September and finish in June, completing 180 days after the student's program has begun.

Designing New Calendars

Those wishing to rethink the instructional year can come up with their own designs for a new calendar plan. The basic considerations in the design are these:

1. Block out weekends, if these are not to be used.
2. Be aware of legal/local holidays.
3. Consider all 12 months for scheduling purposes.
4. Consider state and district minimums for the instructional days per year.
5. Provide opportunities for intersessions.
6. Provide adequate time for intersessions.
7. Include staff development days.
8. Review impact of scheduling on facilities.

How Do Teachers React to the Year-Round Concept?

Teachers' reactions to the year-round concept vary. Some become avid proponents for changing the traditional school calendar because they are convinced that a more continuous learning sequence is advantageous to students. Others will oppose the concept because they are reluctant to give up their long summer vacation, which they see as a fringe benefit of teaching.

Questions asked by undecided teachers are: How will year-round education affect my contract? Will I be required to teach 12 months? What alterations in the curriculum will be required? Through inservice sessions or small group meetings, a knowledgeable educator can answer these and other questions and explain the year-round calendar. Teachers soon learn that pay schedules and contracts remain substantially unchanged, that teachers are usually required to teach the same number of contract days as teachers in the traditional September-June calendar, and that the prospect of extended teaching time is available if they choose to work more days.

When made aware of the instructional opportunities provided with the adoption of a new calendar, teachers become excited about the potential for enrichment and remediation. This enthusiasm becomes contagious as teachers exchange ideas. They become colleagues in a search for better ways of organizing instruction. Teacher talk turns to such comments as: "I plan to change my presentation of social studies concepts. I have always wanted to try this and now I can. The inter-

mittent vacations cause me to look for logical breaks and cohesive units in the subject matter."

As teachers move into the revised calendar year, they realize that the learning rates of their students change. They say that they do not have to spend as much time for review and reteaching and that their students retain more information after coming back from a brief vacation period. It is a frequent experience to hear a teacher tell that upon return from a month's vacation, students remember what story they are to begin reading, or to hear teachers engage in friendly banter about how well their students are doing each time they return from a break.

Some teachers initially worry that the lack of a full summer vacation break may make it more difficult for them to pursue an advanced degree or additional credentials at a college or university. However, experience with year-round education over the past decade indicates that most teachers can find graduate programs suitable to their schedules. More and more universities in areas where year-round education has been initiated are offering courses at night, on weekends, in three-week blocks at the school site, and at extension centers in the community, as well as on campus.

Another concern of teachers is that standardized testing of students in year-round programs be on a parity with other students in the district attending September-June calendar schools. To achieve such parity, it is important that those responsible for setting test dates be alert to the number of instructional days year-round students have had before designating exact dates.

In many, but not all, multi-track, year-round schools, teachers must change rooms periodically as teachers and students arrive and depart according to the schedule of their assigned track. Under these circumstances teachers express concern about storage of supplies and about the availability of supplies throughout the year. It takes careful administrative planning to work with teachers in these situations. Building administrators can help by anticipating storage needs and providing them, by planning for room changes, and by setting a cooperative

tone among the staff. Teachers sometimes speak of the need for having their own rooms, but the overcrowding faced by many districts may preclude that possibility.

Some teachers express concern initially about the possibility of eventual burnout on the part of both teaching staff and students. In practice this has not happened. Rather, many teachers report that the year-round calendar gives them personal opportunities not previously available, such as winter vacations for skiing, fall tours to experience the changing landscape, intensive art activities during a museum's winter program schedule, and a chance to see their own sons and daughters at work in the classroom.

In summary, one might say that teachers' reactions to year-round education depend on their personality, their ability to be flexible and adjust, and their eagerness for change. Teachers who have experienced the new calendar year believe in the motto of Janowski School, an elementary year-round school in Houston, Texas: "Where Learning Never Stops."

How Do Parents React to the Year-Round Concept?

Some parents, when they first learn that their child's school may be converting to a year-round program, oppose the concept, believing that their child will be forced into 12 months of school with no time off. Others view 12 months of school as a blessing, believing their child will move through the grades at a faster pace. Obviously, both perceptions of year-round schools are erroneous.

Once parents understand the concept of year-round education with its intersessions, their initial views change. They usually go though a period of questioning to see whether the calendar's cycles suit their family's lifestyle. With single-track, year-round education, family disruptions are minimal. But in schools considering a multi-track calendar, the first question parents usually ask is, "On what track will my child be placed?" A second question quickly follows when parents with several school-age children want to know whether all their children will be or can be placed on the same track. These questions can be answered quickly by building administrators or the program coordinator if they have carefully thought through the options needed to serve the needs of students and their parents.

In most instances, parents have a choice of tracks so that siblings can be kept together on the same track. Occasionally, parents request that siblings be placed on different tracks, so that they may have more time to interact with each child one-on-one. Parents of high school students sometimes question whether their children will graduate on

time and have an adequate selection of courses in each track. The answer is affirmative in both instances. Parents who ask about scheduling of extracurricular activities are relieved to find that these activities are affected very little by a year-round schedule. Working parents of elementary children ask whether child care will be available year round. Experience from year-round education communities indicates that the availability of child care follows the public school calendars, and it is available when needed.

Something important happens to parents as they examine how an alternative school calendar year will affect their lifestyles. They soon discover how to make a year-round program work for them. Most parents want to cooperate with the school and help their children to succeed. But for working parents, who must take their vacations in the summer, it is often difficult to find time to participate in school activities with their children. With a year-round program, working parents can finally participate in something the school is doing because the school is open in the summer during their vacation. This prospect not only pleases parents but delights their children, whose parents never have been able to visit school during the day.

Many parents, as they look at their family needs, request a certain track for personal reasons – from days off in various seasons for special family gatherings to days off for inexpensive, off-season vacation opportunities. One administrator of a year-round school reports being surprised by a special request from a mother of two boys and two girls. She wanted her two girls placed on one track and her two boys placed on a different track. It seems that when her four youngsters were home together during the summer, they were constantly bickering. She found herself becoming a referee, but not a very good one as she tried to satisfy her children's wishes for entertainment and recreation. With her children divided into two tracks, she could do things with her girls that they liked to do and things with her boys that they liked to do. The mother was proud of the way she cleverly used the school's multi-track system to plan the children's summer

activities and, in the process, to have an enjoyable summer for herself.

Another anecdote illustrates how the year-round program can work for a family and enhance family values. Parents of three school-age children requested that each child be placed on a different track. The mother was about to give birth to her fourth child. The parents arranged scheduling so that the oldest daughter would be home on intersession when the mother returned from the hospital. This daughter could help the mother when help was needed most; and each sibling, in turn, would be able to spend some quality time with the mother and the newborn child. Hence, the flexibility of multi-track, year-round education fulfilled a special family need.

Parents do have some objections to a year-round school, just as they object to many aspects of any school. Parents sometimes complain that they become frustrated with schedule changes required by the multi-track calendar. This is really a planning problem involving communication with parents. All school personnel must work to help parents and community members to understand the year-round education concept. The problem is usually with the parents and not the students, who quickly learn their schedules and know when to leave on intersession and when to return.

As in any community, there are some parents who will complain about anything. And if the year-round school is the latest innovation to arrive on the scene, it is not surprising that it might come under attack.

In summary, parents respond favorably to a year-round program if it works for them. The challenge for building administrators, district officials, and teachers is to educate the community on the merits of year-round education and to make the program work for the community. When educators have done their job effectively, then parents are proud of their year-round schools and will support the calendar change. It is this community support that makes the educators' careful planning all worthwhile.

Considerations for Bringing About Change

Changing a school calendar ingrained in our national tradition takes more than placing the item on a school board's agenda and asking for a yes or no vote. It requires thoughtful and careful planning. There will always be some resistance to change in a community. Because tradition has its own force, it is easier to impede change than it is to make it happen. Nevertheless, change can and will occur when its proponents have a thorough understanding of what they wish to change and how to it bring about. There are several elements involved in helping a community decide to make a change in the traditional school calendar.

1. *Understanding the concept*. Year-round education as a general term is often misunderstood by both educators and lay people in the community. Essentially, year-round education means the restructuring of the school year in such a way that the long summer vacation is broken up into shorter vacation periods throughout the year for the purpose of providing more continuous learning. To make this concept readily understood to parents and the wider community requires numerous examples with accompanying discussion about the various calendar options.

Those administrators, teachers, and parents who are leading the change effort should be prepared to meet with as many groups as they can at any time and any place that is convenient to those groups. Presentations should include:

1. A definition of year-round education.
2. How it is administered (calendar examples).
3. Advantages and disadvantages of each calendar.
4. Discussions of how year-round education can benefit children and teachers.
5. How the change will be initiated and implemented in the district.

2. *Repetition of information*. It is essential that the leaders for change be willing to present information about the basic concept of year-round education repeatedly. Constantly restating the essential information is needed to combat the myths and distortions that opponents of change might float in a community. Most audiences composed of a representative segment of the community will respond positively to solid, factual information presented in an organized and convincing way.

3. *Involvement of the larger community*. Once a school district is seriously committed to studying the possibility of year-round education, it is important to involve representatives of key groups and community agencies that will be affected by the change. This representation should include, but not be limited to, teacher organizations, classified personnel, administrative staff, parent-teacher organizations, parent/community advisory groups, city agencies such as parks and recreation departments, youth-serving agencies, churches, and civic organizations. Most of these groups have calendars that revolve around the public school calendar; a change by the public schools means a change for them.

These community representatives should be involved in the study and discussion process at its earliest stages. This early involvement is critical, because if there is a perception among community representatives that the school administration has already made a decision to change the calendar and they are being asked simply to rubber stamp the decision, then there is likely to be a negative atmosphere that is not conducive to healthy change.

4. *Building support for change within the district team*. At the outset, the board of education must be informed about the rationale for changing the school calendar, the manner in which the change study involving

community representatives will be conducted, and the tentative timeline for implementation. Every school district that has successfully implemented a year-round education program has had the full support of its school board. Board members, as elected representatives, are vulnerable to pressures from those opposing change. Therefore, it is essential for district administrators to provide their school boards with a comprehensive rationale for the change.

Profiles of Year-Round Schools in Action

There are more than 400 year-round schools in the U.S. operating at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Some use multi-track calendars, others are single track. Twelve different year-round calendars are used, and they all are successful. Although the circumstances leading to their establishment differ, they all enjoy the support of their communities. This chapter presents profiles of year-round education in action at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Janowski Elementary School

Janowski Elementary School in Houston has 1,000 students, pre-kindergarten to grade five. In 1983, after a thorough study by the school's staff and administration, a 60-20 multi-track calendar was adopted. Housed in a facility designed for 720 students, the school is still overcrowded, even with the implementation of a multi-track, year-round education program. Janowski is located in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. The mobility rate of the students' families is very high, sometimes as much as 100% in one year. Most of the school's families have more than one student attending Janowski. More than half of the students require instruction in Spanish; many of the rest need augmented English instruction. Janowski is a Chapter One school, with more than 200 students qualifying for Chapter One services.

Janowski is successful for a variety of reasons. First of all, the year-round program was planned carefully, considering both community and faculty needs. Families who felt that the year-round calendar was not appropriate for their lifestyle were allowed to transfer their children to a neighboring September-June school. In Janowski's first year of year-round education, only 22 students transferred; and in succeeding years the transfer-out rate has remained low. Teachers who felt that the year-round calendar was not appropriate for them also were allowed to transfer to another school. Only a small number of teachers chose to transfer. One who transferred wants to return and is waiting for an opening.

Janowski continues to experience success because of changes suggested by faculty, parents, and students. By seeing their suggestions implemented, they have a greater feeling of ownership of the school; teachers try harder. Also, the school receives strong support from the district's administration. When problems arise, the district administration will modify and adjust to facilitate the year-round concept. For example, the district's testing schedule was adjusted for Janowski so that its year-round students could have the same number of days of instruction before taking the tests as do students in the September-June calendar schools.

One of Janowski's keys to success is its unique intersession program, which helps to maintain high quality, continuous learning for all students. Prior to the introduction of year-round education, the school's test scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills were showing a gradual decline each year. This decline stopped when the school converted to a year-round program, even though the school's changing socioeconomic profile would indicate that further decline was likely. Most Houston educators believe that intersession classes were a major factor in reversing the test score decline.

With Janowski's 60-20 calendar schedule, the intersession programs occur during the 20-day break. Those teachers on intersession break are given first option to teach intersession classes if they so choose.

Many teachers enjoy teaching intersession because they can earn extra income and because it is a unique teaching experience.

All students are invited to participate in intersession programs, but they are voluntary. All intersession students spend at least an hour a day in Janowski's computer lab working on skills identified by their teachers as needing remediation or in word processing to develop their creative writing abilities. In a short period students achieve at least minimal computer competencies. Intersession students participate in a limited number of field trips. Also, many guest speakers come to the school and bring experiences that urban children are not likely to have, such as churning butter, quilting, cooking, and animal care. Sometimes, the intersession is devoted to a single theme or project for the entire 20-day period. An example of this was an intersession devoted to putting on a play. The students wrote the play, made the scenery, props, and costumes, rehearsed it, and even baked the cookies they served to the invited audience – all in 20 days. Another intersession group did a project in which the students constructed "Intersession City."

Whether for enrichment or remediation, the key to the success of intersessions is the freedom teachers have to be innovative and creative. They are encouraged to try out new ways of teaching without using basal readers and textbooks traditionally used for formal instruction. Only the imagination of the teacher limits what goes on in intersessions. Some teachers, of course, are more creative than others; but what is special about Janowski's intersessions is that teachers have the freedom to teach in their own way. Janowski's intersession classes are so popular that, even when parents have not given the children permission to attend, some of them sneak away from home and participate anyway.

Janowski works because its calendar and program are tailored to the needs of the community. With only short 20-day vacations, its Hispanic students who are learning English do not have time to forget as they would over an entire summer of no English in a Spanish-

dominant environment. Teachers used to report how frustrated their students were on returning to school in September and being expected to remember their previously learned English skills. With shorter breaks, students remember their skills; they experience more success and can see their progress. And if the students attend intersession classes, they have more opportunites to acquire and practice English skills in a nonthreatening environment. Even with the high mobility of the school's population, resulting in the loss of many days of instruction, students can be placed on a particular track, be switched in tracks, or be encouraged to attend intersession in order to acquire additional learning time. Year-round scheduling is flexible enough to allow students to make up lost time in many ways.

Janowski School succeeds because it accommodates faculty, students, and community. It offers the community flexibility; and the community, in return, offers its support. Although this year-round school came into existence to ease overcrowding, it has accomplished that and much more in the four years since it was established in 1983.

Incline Middle School and Suva Intermediate School

The flexibility of year-round education becomes clearer by examining how it operates in two intermediate level schools. Though distinctly different, these two schools illustrate important features that a year-round schedule can provide.

Incline Middle School in Incline Village, Nevada, is a small school serving 275 students in grades six through eight. Although it started with the basic 45-15 Single-Track Plan, the school now offers families a more flexible schedule called the Modified Mountain Plan. Instead of adhering to a strict 45 days in school, 15 days out, the school modified the calendar to provide a five-week summer vacation and a lengthened winter holiday. With no overcrowding, there has been no need to use multi-track scheduling.

Incline Village's economy is based heavily on recreation and tourism, making it difficult for families to take vacations during the cus-

tomary vacation periods that families in other parts of the country use. With the flexibility provided by the year-round calendar, families can enjoy off-season vacations. As a result, the school has enjoyed strong support from the community. At the same time, the better-paced schedule has helped to reduce absences by both teachers and students.

In contrast to Incline Middle School, the Suva Intermediate School in Montebello, California, serves a student body of 1,600 students in grades five through eight. To handle the overcrowding, the school has adopted a 45-15 multi-track schedule. Like many middle schools, Suva's fifth and sixth grade are mostly self-contained, while in grades seven and eight students spend part of the day in a self-contained classroom and part of the day moving from class to class for special subjects.

Middle school students need a continuous learning mode, which the year-round concept provides. Also, the multi-track calendar is particularly appropriate for the exploratory nature of the middle school curriculum. For example, the art teacher can offer an exploratory block of art instruction of up to nine weeks for each track of students and earn additional income with an extended teaching contract. Suva, like so many other year-round schools, experiences fewer discipline problems and higher-than-expected attendance patterns.

Huntington Park High School

Year-round education came to Los Angeles' Huntington Park High School in July 1981, after a year's attempt at extended-day classes on a campus built for 2,400 that was trying to educate more than 3,000. After careful study, community leaders and school staff urged the adoption of a multi-track, year-round calendar as a better option than either extended-day or double-session classes. Now with 3,600 students, Huntington Park High has adopted a three-track Concept 6 schedule. With this calendar, the school has achieved a 50% gain in capacity, since only 2,400 students are on campus at any one time.

In concert with its feeder elementary and junior highs and with strong support from the Los Angeles Unified School District, Huntington Park High has developed an impressive year-round program.

Each of the three tracks offers an extensive choice of courses to students. Each track has its own representatives in the student government. Teachers generally follow the same track schedule as the students and identify themselves as faculty on tracks A, B, or C. Cooperation among the three groups is strong and there is virtually no rivalry among the tracks.

Huntington Park's student body is 95% Hispanic, with many having limited English-speaking ability when they enroll at the school. The school has an enviable reputation for quality education and for making students feel important. Standardized achievement scores at the school have gone up each year since year-round education was initiated. Many staff members attribute the increase in part to the year-round concept.

Huntington Park has a full extracurricular program, and the athletic program has continued unabated. Job opportunities for students are available in the community throughout the year. Vandalism has decreased to the point where it is only a minor problem. Student attendance is higher than when the school operated on a September-June calendar. Students who are off-track (on vacation) have not proved to be a problem; indeed, they seem to respect the privacy of on-track students who need to complete their class assignments.

Huntington Park High, in breaking out of the September-June calendar that impedes innovation in most U.S. high schools, is demonstrating that significant change is possible by moving to a year-round schedule, and that good results can follow the change.

Conclusion

With the year 2000 fast approaching, it is reasonable to question whether a school calendar designed for the agricultural economy of the 1800s is appropriate for today's schools. Can we continue to justify a school calendar year that includes a three-month interruption of formal instruction? Year-round education proponents argue convincingly that continuous instruction is better instruction. By reorganizing the instructional year to eliminate the long summer vacation, it becomes possible to provide more continuous instruction, thereby improving retention and reducing memory loss.

Year-round education has proved itself. Achievement scores are equal to or better than comparable traditional calendar-year schools; capital outlay and operating costs are substantially reduced; more opportunities for remediation are possible; student and teacher attendance is up; vandalism is down. One final question summarizes why year-round education, in one form or another, ought to be adopted in most of the nation's schools.

If year-round education were the traditional school calendar and had been for a hundred years, and if someone were to suggest a "new" calendar whereby school students were to be exempt from formal instruction for up to three months at a time, would the American public allow, or even consider, such a scheme?

The year-round concept as described in this fastback provides an answer.

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The National Association for Year-Round Education serves as an information center about year-round education in the U.S. Membership in the professional organization is open to both individuals and institutions. The association is located at 6401 Linda Vista Road, San Diego, CA 92111. Phone: (619)292-3679. The San Diego County Office of Education has been host to the association since 1981.

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